

To Get Through by Lady yang

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Summary: Jonathon is doing alright. Even though the silhouettes of Demogorgons stalk his dreams and guilt eats the outer layer of his stomach raw at night, he's fine. Jonathon Byers is fine, he has to be. As long as he can take care of his mom and brother and keep them safe from now on, he will be okay. It has to be enough to get him through.

1. Chapter 1

To Get Through 1: Heartbeat: *This is what I like about photographs. They're proof that once, even if just for a heartbeat, everything was perfect.*

Yo, Jonathon Byers fans! Me and my sister (MistressYin) both decided to attempt a one-word writing prompt for our favorite characters in Stranger Things, who we found don't have many fanfiction stories written about them out there. I hope you enjoy this series, my goal here is to update one new one-shot to it every day for the entire month, so we'll see how it goes...

The word of the day is...Heartbeat!

X

X

X

X

It started when he was relatively young...

Jonathon was seven when he took his first pictures on his camera and from that point on, he knew he loved photography.

Most would think those first pictures would have been shitty and blurry because he was so young, but even then, he understood how special it was that he was even given the chance to take them himself. He understood how precious the small piece of machinery between his tiny hands was.

It was the Fourth of July and his older cousin had brought his camera all the way to their house from the farm he lived on hours away. His cousin, Kev, as he went by, boasted about getting the bulky camera for his birthday and he was going to photograph the fireworks their fathers were to be setting off that night.

Kev was terrible with the camera. Jonathon didn't think it was his

fault, he was too excitable and jumped around a lot with it in his hands. He touched it while he had sticky food on his hands and didn't really care much when the pictures actually did, miraculously turn out okay.

His cousin was bossy and loud, years of working on a farm and never being watched made him pretty outgoing and boisterous, but he did let Jonathon play with his camera when he'd lost interest in trying to take a pictures of random objects, and failing multiple times, wasting an amazing amount of film in the process. Jonathon had to bite his knuckles to keep from trying to lecture Kev on the how to properly treat his things.

But he kept quiet. He liked to be on Kev's good side, his cousin was twelve and when he fought with him, it made his mom and dad fight because Kev was his dad's brother's kid.

Jonathon had never seen anything like the camera before. His family didn't own anything quite as fancy or new looking.

He's sure Kev wouldn't usually have anything that nice either, but from what his father said, the farm was doing rather well, flourishing, Jonathon thinks he remembers the word his father used. He knew his dad was hoping to butter up his brother and get some of the cash. Jonathon didn't quite understand why they couldn't just ask for more money, he was his brother after all, but his father seemed very adamant on his plan, so Jonathon acted on his best behavior. He didn't even cry when Kev knocked him into a pile of chopped wood that crushed his fingers and gave him splinters.

So when Kev had used up the little amount of patience he had and tossed the camera onto their table, grumbling about stupid machines and late reactions on the flashes, Jonathon took his chance.

He slid quietly to the table, almost like a whispering ghost, and softly tapped Kev on the shoulder.

"Um...Kev?" He mumbled while twisting his fingers together.

Kev turned around with an irritated look on his face, and Jonathon knew he needed to act quick.

"W-well," he took a breath and steeled himself, he knew how to deal with Kev, "I was wondering if it would be okay for me to use your camera, just to try it out?"

Kev looked at him surprised for a moment, but then smirked.

"And what's in it for me, Johnny?"

Jonathon grimaced, he hated when people called him Johnny. His dad called him Johnny. He felt a little bit of anger spike him. Why couldn't Kev just be nice?

"I promise I'll be careful....and..." he floundered for a moment on what he could give up that would be good enough for Kev, "And I'll give you my whole pop at dinner!" It was a big sacrifice, but one he was willing to make.

Kev sneered, "Really? That's the best you got? I forgot you losers were dirt poor!" He laughed smarmily, "No, I can get a pop whenever I want."

Jonathon frowned when Kev turned away and began to walk away.

"Wait!" He said as loudly as he dared, his voice was soft even as a young boy, Jonathon pursed his lips to one side, "I take really good pictures?" He had no idea if he would take good pictures or not, but fuck, Kev was stopped in his tracks and actually listening, so he was going to go with it. "You can have all the credit for taking them and you can show your friends and stuff?"

Kev turned around, and Jonathon licked his lips nervously.

"I'm going to let you get away with suggesting my pictures are less than satisfying just this once." He growled, but looked thoughtful for a moment.

"Okay, squirt." He moved closer conspiratorially, "I don't know about you, but I told all my friends back home that I would have some killer proof of the explosions that are going to go off tonight, and I don't want them to think I was making the whole thing up."

Jonathon was shell shocked that his plan had worked, but composed

his facial expression and suppressed the happiness he felt welling within him.

Kev picked up the camera from the table and threw it from hand to hand.

"Mmm...okay, we got a deal...." He stopped and then a thin and satisfied smile crept up his face, "but, before I can give it to ya, you got to say pretty please, my cousin who is better than me."

Jonathon went rigid. He didn't want to admit that out loud. He heard it from his father enough to believe it. He didn't need his own voice turning against him too. But...that camera...he sighed and internally groaned, "Fine. Will you pretty please let me use your camera my cousin who better than me."

"Mph, naw, I change my mind."

Jonathon instantly felt tears well up behind his eyelids and his heart sank terribly low into his stomach. He'd done everything Kev wanted, asked politely and even kept the annoyance from his voice.

Loud and obnoxious laughter met his ears and he quickly looked up to see Kev grinning like Christmas had come early.

"Ah, you are such a baby. I was just kidding you little twerp. Here, take it."

He threw the camera up in the air with one lofty hand and Jonathon gasped and lunged for the piece of machinery.

He barely got his fingers around it and it slipped out of his hand once, only for him to grip it tight again between his tiny yet nimble fingers.

Jonathon's heartbeat in his ears and it was too loud for him to think, but if he could bypass the fear rising inside him, he felt a small amount of triumph and excitement.

Then a big hand snatched at his shoulder and clasp it painfully tight.

No, no no no no, I'm sorry-

He looked up and Kev was right in his face, his breath blowing periodically into his mouth and heating it uncomfortably. Every pant from the older boy smelled like the fried fish they had for lunch and maybe something else but Jonathon didn't know what. He only knew he wanted to get away.

He leaned back as far as he could with the hand still on his shoulder.

"What do you want?" He asked, and tried to scowl menacingly when he realized the fear that was inching its way into his being.

"These better be shitting good pictures, Johnny." Kev snarled, then pushed him away roughly, his back ramming into the corner of the table.

Jonathon groaned in pain, but held his lips tightly shut when he heard the pitiful noise he let escape his mouth.

Kev barked a laugh and sauntered away.

Later that night, when the sky turned a deep indigo and his parents sat up chairs to watch the fireworks, Jonathon was almost sure that he would be able to pull off the pictures of the fireworks.

He'd practiced all throughout the day, while keeping in mind the fact that he should conserve the film. He didn't want to think about what Kev would do if he didn't have enough film to take pictures of the fireworks.

Worrying aside, it turned out he loved taking pictures! When he picked up the camera, his fast beating fast from anticipation and nerves, but as he started taking pictures, he forgot to be afraid and was too distracted to feel anything besides great focus on what he was photographing. Something inside of him just calmed when he held the camera in his hands. He thought he was pretty good at taking pictures too, very satisfied within himself on the quality of pictures he'd taken so far. He'd only had Will, his little brother as a model as of yet, but Will moved and squirmed so much, Jonathon thought it was impressive that he'd managed any not blurry pictures at all.

Will was almost four and man, did he love the spotlight. He giggled when Jonathon spun around his little body trying to find a good angle for the pictures. That's where he spent most of the day, his mom was busy making a big dinner with the food the extended family had brought, and so he spent his time keeping Will from entering the kitchen and bothering her.

She didn't need any more distractions, and if Jonathon was honest, he would much rather spend his time with his little brother than Kev, no matter how cool everyone thought his cousin was.

Jonathon felt anxiety grow in his stomach as he sat down on the grass to watch the fireworks, but he clutched the camera in his hands and fiddled with wrap, and soon felt a little better. He left the few seats they had, open for the adults that may choose to sit down.

For the next half hour, he spent his time working intensely on trying to capture the exact moment the fireworks went off on camera. It was difficult because Jonathon always loved fireworks and was mesmerized by how they worked, so he kept getting distracted.

Taking the photos of the fireworks was a tiresome job because Kev had been right, the camera had an indefinite late reaction. Every time he thought he had got it right, he would shake it and it would come out as if he took the pictures three seconds later than when he'd clicked the button.

Eventually, he learned how to time it right and caught at least seven of the fireworks exactly as they went off!

After that, he set down his camera and watched the rest of them go off in peace.

The colors were beautiful. Will really hated the loud sounds the fireworks made and cried when they first went off though. When Jonathon had taken him into his lap and acted like he loved the fireworks, Will became a lot less afraid. He was still a little fussy when an especially loud one went off, but he was better than before.

Jonathon sat Will beside him, and they both kneeled in the grass.

He made quiet explosion sounds with his mouth trying to predict when they would go off, and Will giggled every time, trying to make the sounds as well, but failing miserably with the lisp he was acquiring as his back teeth came in.

His dad and his dad's brother laughed chaotically as they set of explosion after explosion.

They'd long since ran out of real fireworks and now were creating makeshift ones from their extra gun powder and lighters. Jonathon knew this couldn't be safe, but he didn't say anything, instead pulling his brother closer as if that would make him less of a possible target. Will adored the attention and nuzzled into his brother's side.

Jonathon wasn't sure why his dad acted this insanely happy way sometimes, but he didn't think he liked it. It was a weird kind of happy. It made him do really crazy things, and they were usually dangerous. He noticed that when his dad was like this he also really wanted to be very close to his mom.

Jonathon knew something was going to go wrong soon. Something always went wrong when his dad was being reckless.

A giant explosion went off sideways and shot towards the place where they were all sitting, Jonathon wasn't even surprised.

He grasped for Will, it was his knee jerk reaction to bad situations and threw him away from the fire zone.

Kev yelled and lunged out the way, like a smart person, the negative side of Jonathon's brain supplied.

Jonathon scrunched his eyes up as the thing blasted at him, but after a moment of tense shrieks and frenzied laughter from his father, he finally had enough of his bearings to wrench his eyes open.

What he saw had his stomach coiling in warmth. His mom's worry lined face was crouched around him in protection. Her eyes were clinched shut just like his had been. He took a breath and tried to calm himself, it was just a false alarm. He could now see that the explosion had shot just to the right of them, missing him and his

mom by mere feet. He could hear his mom's fearful breaths as she slowly opened her eyes in realization on what had occurred.

Her heartbeat was erratic, pumping right next to his ear, his was much the same. He liked finding similarities between him and his mom. He even imagined their hearts were just about beating at the same time. It was comforting.

She frantically asked if both her sons were okay, and Jonathon nodded for them both because Will was tearful, but it was from fear before anything else.

Just as quickly as the warmth flooded him from his mother's fierce protection, it had left.

She shot up like flames licking gasoline. It wasn't unusual for Jonathon to see his mom so angry. He wasn't even scared of this anger at the moment, at least not for himself; sometimes he was scared for her when she was this angry though.

She stormed over to their father and then it was blur of freeze frame pictures, much like the photos he took.

A lot of yelling happened that night, a lot of things broke. His father lost that insanely happy look when he was confronted and prevented from doing exactly what he wanted when he wanted. He remembered a picture in his head of a glass broken across the grass. Another picture of bleeding fingers as the glass slipped through his hands as he worked to pick it up, he couldn't have Will walking through their yard and getting cut up by shards of glass. What kind of brother would he be if he let that happen.

He watched the entire scene with a head bent low, trying to make himself productive by comforting Will, and cleaning what he could.

While he remembers exactly what happened, he can only imagine it in forms of photographs. Scene by scene as many pictures, but frozen in great detail.

Jonathon's uncle rolled his eyes at all the fighting and muttered about how the fun ending too soon and Joyce being a stick in the

mud. These mocking words only made his own father all the angrier. His uncle took his son by the hand and took him for a drive until his hot headed brother and his crazy ass wife calmed down a bit.

Jonathon knew that only meant they would be gone until tomorrow morning in some vacant hotel, but would return looking for breakfast, acting as if nothing had happened.

Afterwards, it was all deathly silent besides Will's whimpers that Jonathon was trying to quiet.

He remembers his father's beyond irritated face, but it had been hours of fighting since the incident with the explosion and he didn't have the energy to start another argument over Will, his disgrace of a son. He'd stormed away, probably to go get a smoke in the car like he did whenever he wanted to calm himself.

Will was on his mom's lap, playing with her hair a couple more hours later. He'd long since been comforted by his mother's sweet voice and cuddles, something his father didn't think they deserved and his mom ignored full heartedly.

She began playing a game with Will now, and Jonathon sat by, watching. Observing.

He'd found Kev's camera on the ground where he'd left it and was again taking pictures of Will, but this time with his mom too.

Will was standing in front of his kneeling mom and she would point to a feature on her face and he'd say back what it was.

She pointed to her eyes.

"EYES!" He squealed and she laughed happily.

Snap. Jonathon took a picture. It was blurry.

She pointed to her ears.

"Mama's ears!" He said loudly. She responded with a soft, "That's right baby, that's my ears!"

Snap. Another photo gone by.

She pointed to her mouth, "What's this baby?"

Will laughed like it was the funniest thing ever said, "It's Mama's mouth!" He pointed to her mouth himself, and she chopped down softly as if she was going to eat his fingers. He shrieked loudly with laughter. She'd already done that trick twelve times but it seemed to make him laugh every time and Jonathon couldn't help staring in wonderment at the moment the two shared. It was as close to perfect as he had ever seen, and Jonathon was determined to get the perfect picture of Will's laughter and his mom's sweet and adoring smile this time around. He wanted to remember this.

Snap.

He shook it out softly at his side, not wanting to interrupt the moment the two were having.

Once the picture faded into existence, he eagerly looked to see if it was good.

He titled his head at it in a very doggish way.

It was good picture. It was good... except for the fact that the lighting was completely terrible. Everything was too dark and you couldn't exactly see his mom's face and he didn't think it did justice for both Will's and his mom's pretty squinted eyed smiles.

As he looked really close, he was happy to see that it did catch on his mom and brother's identical wide mouths when they smiled. Jonathon's smile was never as pretty or straight as his mom's.

His was all crooked and small, morphing his face in a weird way and his eyes were too wide when he smiled, made him look kind of insane.

Will's looked just like his mom's though. Right down to the wrinkles at the corners of their eyes.

It was beautiful.

The picture was beautiful because they were in it.

He stuffed it into his pocket where he would keep it and put up in his room.

He didn't know when he would get the chance to take another picture again, so he kept that photo, knowing he would give the rest to Kev to do what he wanted with, possibly burn. This one was special though, he'd risk getting caught with the picture before he consciously gave it up. He sat down his camera and watched happily as the game continued.

Years later and he had a brand new camera from Nancy Wheeler, his brother's best friend's older sister, which he has no idea how she acquired such a nice camera or why she had even spent the time to get it for him and yet he still has that picture in his room.

But the difference is now he has a whole lot of pictures hung up on the walls. All over the one side in a shrine kind of way.

Pictures of Will's little friends playing Dungeon and Dragons merged into pictures of the forest they live practically within. The golds and reds of the fall trees traced patterns in the photos of the snow covered ones that fall right to them. Tons of pictures of animals littered the wall erratically because Jonathon can't help it, he thinks they are adorable. Even some photos of Nancy made it up there too. They were taken when she wasn't looking at school, just a few, but he still felt guilty enough to hide them behind the forested pictures. There are tons of pictures of his mom cooking or otherwise burning food in the kitchen, his mom laughing, his mom at work, but mostly, the wall was taken up by photos of Will.

Real nice close ups that almost look professional, a lot of pictures where Will looks downright adorable smiling where he wasn't aware anyone was photographing him. There are many of him dressed up in funny costumes. One spiel they'd taken together in a photo booth, but Jonathon absolutely hates those pictures and only keeps them because Will seems to hold some kind of emotional attachment to them. Even ones of close ups of Will's eye, or his ear, maybe his fat lip, just because Will wanted to see it in picture form because he thought it was kind of tough looking.

Will liked having his picture taken. He liked it a lot. That is until the... the thing. Jonathon would come up with something to call it, but Will hates talking about it, and every time he brought it up with his mom, she got really nervous and stressed. He didn't want to worry either of them more than they already were, so he didn't talk about it either. So now it's just this memory of a thing that everyone avoids.

Jonathon startles a little when Will appears behind him in his room.

His heart beat quick, but he calms his beating heart quick enough though and smiles crookedly at his brother.

"Hey," He says and flings himself onto his bed, his socked feet sliding nicely on the hard wood, "What's up?"

Will stared at Jonathon for an uncomfortable amount of time, but Jonathon didn't really mind and only grabbed his school bag from beside his bag and started shuffling through it.

After Jonathon had fully gone through and gotten out some English homework he needed to work on, Will finally sat down gently on the side of his bed.

Jonathon kept his eyes on his notebook and where he was writing in wiggly lettering. He knew staring made Will uncomfortable these days, whereas it used to excite him. It made his chest ache with guilt that he hadn't been able to protect his brother from the horror he faced, and in the least suffered with him through it, but instead he had chosen to stand by. Chosen because Jonathon knew there was something he could have done. He should have driven Will home, he should have believed his mom when she told him about the lights the first time, maybe they would have figured out where Will faster, maybe he wouldn't have had to suffer so long, maybe he-

"I was wondering if I could ask you something?" Will's rough voice brought him away from his thoughts.

Jonathon finally looked up from where he had started using incomprehensible writing, and gave Will his full attention.

"Sure, what is it?" Casual and normal, just what Will wanted.

Will twisted his hands together nervously, like he almost felt worried about what he wanted to say. Jonathon needed to fix that, Will was his brother and he could tell him he hated him for all he cared if it made him feel better, if it made him more Will.

"Hey, it's okay. Whatever you want to ask I'll try to answer." He thought that sounded pretty mature and totally not worried.

Will swallowed thickly.

"Does it help?" he squeaked out, but then continued when Jonathon scrunched his eyebrows in confusion, "Sorry, I-I mean, does um, does taking...pictures and stuff, like, help when your upset?" his deep eyes bored into Jonathon searching for an answer.

Jonathon was thoroughly surprised by the question, it was definitely one he hadn't been expecting, but he thought he understood what Will was getting at.

"Uh, yeah. Sometimes. I like taking my camera out when I'm upset or bored. It's um...distracting?" he wasn't sure if that made sense. He'd never really considered it a coping mechanism before, he knew he liked it a lot though.

Will nodded, "So like, it makes you feel good to take pictures, like, it makes your um- uh, bad thoughts go away?" Will asked for clarification.

Jonathon was stopped short on that one. He opened his mouth and then closed it.

Finally, "Yeah, um, kind of." Will didn't look satisfied with that, and before his brother could open his mouth and word the question in a different way, he continued.

"I," he swallowed. Why was his voice so thick? "Well, I mean."

Will cut off his terrible attempt with words. Why were words so hard sometimes, "Jonathon, why do you like taking pictures so much?"

Jonathon sat on that a moment and found that this question was easier to answer.

"Because it gives me something to do with my hands and it gets me moving and seeing new things, which is fun, but I guess, it's like, I don't know....I guess, when I feel bad I can see the pictures and remember the good things, you know? Like, I can pretend they are happening and see them perfectly. They are like my own personal memory boxes that I can open whenever I need them. They don't really bother anybody and I get to choose which ones I want to remember." Once he said it, he knew these things to be true, but before this, he'd never really considered why he liked taking pictures so much. Why he liked looking at them the way he did.

Will nodded looking down, "Oh. That makes sense."

They sat in silence for a good couple of minutes, but it was a peaceful quiet, Jonathon could hear Will's heart beat but it was slower than his fast paced one. Odd, Will's heart was always on a runaway train.

He wished he had his camera in his hands.

"You draw when you aren't feeling great, right?" He already knew this to be a true fact, but sometimes it was nice to talk about stuff like this. Stuff that no one else really cares about, but everyone wish they did. Jonathon did care though, because it was for Will.

Will nodded his head once, and looked up smiling, but it was forced. "Yeah, it's just like that." he seemed happy to have something in common with his brother, but it wasn't enough. He didn't continue talking. Jonathon was sure he thought himself to be a burden to his older brother. Will did that sometimes. He wasn't that great with words either.

When Jonathon wanted to help his mom he just listened to her talk. She liked to have someone there to talk too, be agreeable enough, maybe someone understanding. Jonathon was good at being that person.

But Will was quieter than their mother. He wasn't exactly like Jonathon who thought it impossible to fathom his thoughts into words, much less try and explain them to someone. Jonathon wasn't sure what Will needed, that's what made helping him through this situation so difficult.

But it was obvious words weren't going to be the way through this with his little brother.

Jonathon got up abruptly and shuffled over to his desk and got out a couple scrap papers and pulled down some photos from the walls. Will looked kind of scared, but walked over to his back curiously.

Jonathon bit his lip as he wrote in big bold letters, 'BYERS FAMILY SCRAPBOOK' on a blank piece of paper.

Will's eyes lit up like the sun in understanding as he looked on.

Jonathon stood back up and shifted from foot to foot, unsure how to say that he wanted to help Will, and maybe he needed a project, because that was the kind of thing that helped him. He just needed to have his camera in his hands, and everything was okay for a little while. He needed to find Will's camera. "I was thinking maybe you'd like to help me make a scrapbook for our family."

"Oh, That's a cool idea." Will said thoughtfully, "We could give it to mom for Christmas!" Will exclaimed excitedly.

Jonathon grinned. Will hadn't been very enthusiastic lately, and when he did it seemed fake, like he was doing for his benefit. At the moment though, he looked like he actually liked the idea of working on something with him. He was sure it sounded perfectly distracting. "I think she'd really like that."

It looked like a million thoughts were going through Will's head. Good, getting him creative and thinking about projects was what he needed, at least until he was ready to talk like he used to. Maybe he'd stay like Jonathon and keep his thoughts inside. Jonathon would have to come up with a lot more projects for them if that was the case.

"You can take the pictures of course, and I can draw and write in the book because well- " Will gave a guilty look, "Your handwriting kind of sucks." Jonathon just laughed in his odd way, not at all offended, but rightly feeling challenged.

"Is that right little Byers?" He poked Will in the side so he knew he

was just kidding around.

Will crunched in on himself afraid of being tickled, and smirked while sitting down at the desk.

"Yup!" Will popped the P, while he took out a couple more pencils that Jonathon had stashed somewhere in his desk, then Will quickly stood and ran from the room. Jonathon stared after him in shock, afraid he had brought up a bad memory for his younger brother or something as equally bad. His heart quickened a little when Will stuck his head back in a moment later.

"Hey, I will be right back I promise, but I have some good paper in my room and want to get my crayons too!" he scampered off down the hall, but just a moment later Jonathon saw his head peaking back in, "I mean, if it's alright with you to work on now." He seemed worried, but Jonathon just shook his head.

"I want to do it now, don't worry, I think it will be a lot of fun." He said with a voice filled with honesty. It was true, he would love nothing more than to work on a project with his brother, especially when it made him animated like this.

Jonathon could almost see his happy and free from nightmare and flashback side of Will peeking out for the first time in weeks.

When Will returned to his room with arms overflowing with paper, crayons, and tape, he'd known he'd done something right for his brother.

"So, do you think this picture could be on the cover, maybe you could work the title around it?" Jonathon asked quietly, sliding over the photo he had in mind. It was a photo of a young Will standing in front of their mom, laughing wildly as she gnawed on his fingers in a silly game.

Will smirked with the side of his mouth, "I knew you would choose this picture, and it's a 100% yes, I think I can definitely work a title around it! Mom really likes this picture anyway, though she said it makes her face a funny shape."

Will smiled real big and squinted like Jonathon loved, just like Jonathon remembered it. It wasn't fake, or forced and god, did Jonathon wish he had his camera around his neck at that moment.

Thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed! You should definitely check out MistressYin's story if you have time!

I would really appreciate if you would leave a comment. I'm needing all the encouragement I can get for this challenge! Anyone who would like to try and participate just tell me, and I'd love to give you our November word prompt list! There can never be enough Fanfiction in our world, so don't be shy!

Thank you again,

Love LadyYang3

2. Chapter 2: Wind:

A/N

Yo! Thank you for reading my story! I appreciate it so much! The fact that I have received comments already means so much to me! They each have brought a smile to my face and made me work harder to get this chapter done, so I hope you enjoy it! I love Jonathon Byers and think he is under represented in the fandom too! The entire Byers family needs more love! If anyone wants to talk about him or anything really, I'd love to!

All you have to do is tell me, and we can find a sight we both have an account for so we can talk!

Chapter 2:

Wind:

Love is like the wind. You can't see it, but you can always feel it.

Jonathon Byers loved like the wind.

It's not on purpose of course; he just doesn't know how to be any other way.

X

X

X

Will Byers understood this about his older brother.

He knew that Jonathon had a really hard time with words. It's painfully obvious. Just a simple fact to add to their messed up lives.

Jonathon Byers is terribly bad at something that is universally, a good thing, to be good at.

Communication.

Will can tell that he is trying to get better, but that didn't mean it was easy, and that definitely didn't mean it was at all working.

Will personally didn't think it was that big of deal. Sadly, it seemed that everyone else did.

The young boy had always been rather chatty when he was young and having an older brother sitting ready to listen to whatever boring thing you had to say was a dream come true. As of late though, it's been harder to let out the words he wished to scream from in his throat. They always got caught on the way out, choking him like his own personal noose. He wondered if it was like that for Jonathon too.

While talking and expressing himself came naturally to Will, that didn't mean he was oblivious and couldn't see past his own nose like some would believe.

No, Will was a very observant boy. That was how he knew his mom worked too hard every day and even if she smiled when she got home from work, the tightening in her muscles in her face didn't slip past him. That's how he heard the way she groaned just a little before standing up from a particularly comfy position. Will knew that was from lifting heavy boxes off the trucks for her job because no one else was brave enough to take that particular workload on themselves. No one told him that, he just watched, and assessed. He observed.

So that's why he knew that the unusual quiet in the house was getting to Jonathon.

That's why he could tell he was trying to fill the void that had suddenly appeared with Will's sworn quietness.

It was small things that made it noticeable. For a creature of habit like Jonathon though, every small change made a huge difference.

Jonathon Byers loved like the wind. The wind didn't make a sound, it was just the power of it rushing against your ears that made you listen. It's feeling. The wind's echo.

Jonathon was a quiet person. Will was pretty sure he'd learned to be quiet at an early age, walking around on tiptoes and dodging squeaky

boards in the ground.

So even now, years away from those horrid memories, Jonathon still tiptoed in the mornings when he got up to make breakfast, he still whispered when no one was around to be bothered by a loud voice, and he still did everything with care and finesse instead of blubbering through life like everyone else.

That's why it was crazy and more than a little amusing to see Jonathon try and make his own noise to fill the silence.

Will only felt a small twinge of guilt in his chest when he noticed his brother trying so hard to be a creation of noise. Frankly, it might be good for Jonathon, and Will really wasn't feeling up to talking much anymore.

The mornings weren't so bad. Will felt best when he first woke up and would have constant conversation and enthusiastic stories of campaign ideas or drawing plans, he knew it made Jonathon happy which made him even more inclined to do it.

But when dinner rolled around at night, Will was unusually tired, a little used up for the day. It wasn't an intentional silence, but sadly, it was so obvious that even he couldn't help noticing it.

Jonathon Byers loved like the wind. The wind didn't make a sound, but it could make the leaves rustle loudly with just a slight breeze. It could make leftover rain water *drip drip drip* from the roofs of houses. It could make wind chimes tingle harmoniously with a simple command.

Jonathon wasn't very good at filling the everyday silence by himself.

Will knew it wasn't because he didn't have much to say, it was that he didn't know how to say it.

Ultimately, instead of filling the morning with the regular clank of pots and pans, the sound of sizzling food on the stove, the comforting sounds of someone walking around but trying and failing to be quiet, no Jonathon couldn't bring himself to make those loud and singularized sounds, instead, he decided to play music.

Music he played in the morning was always soft, barely hearable if there was a conversation being held at all. It was sweet and warm in a way Will wouldn't have expected.

When he got up in the morning, he looked forward to coming into the kitchen and seeing his brother hum to himself as he worked methodically.

Dinner was a much louder affair, and Will assumed it was because no one at all was in the house when he was home. Their mom was working usually, and Will often went to Mike's house or the arcade to play.

Whenever Will walked into his home around dinner, he'd hear loud, for Jonathon's standards, music blaring through the house. Every day there was different artist playing. As days passed he started to see a pattern in the days certain music was played, like he was going through some planned loop.

On rare days, Jonathon would be singing along to the music when Will walked in, but would stop as soon as he'd see his little brother, immediately turning the music down and getting ready to listen to anything and everything Will wished to talk about.

On Will's quieter days, he would somehow just know that he wasn't feeling great and without him so much as saying a word, would take out his music he had been playing and play whatever mix tape he'd made for Will that week.

Jonathon always tried to talk just a little bit too.

He'd tell him something that happened in school or tell Will about a particular picture he took, and Will always thought it was sweet the way the story sounded completely planned, like he'd been thinking about how to tell him in just the right way. Then he would push the conversation back to his younger brother, and happily listen to what happened to him that day, asking questions while working through his homework or whatever else he had to do.

Will was observant, and Jonathon was like the wind.

That's why Will could tell that Jonathon loved him.

Someone else might have needed a verbal confirmation of the fact. But anyone who knew Jonathon Byers, knew that was not a likely thing to expect.

Will didn't need constant confirmation.

Will was a smart kid; he knew that everyone showed their affection in different ways. He couldn't be angry with Jonathon for not showing him that he loved him the way he wanted him to or as much as he wanted either. Jonathon did it in the only way he knew how to, and gave him as much as he could. He would never hold it against his older brother that he had fears. It meant a lot to him that he would let him in to begin with, that he would take the risk of being vulnerable enough to feel anything for him rather than anger for being the burden he felt he was.

So yeah, Jonathon was quiet, and he was hilariously terrible at talking about his feelings, using words like 'stuff' and mumbling until the conversation was over. But he loved Will.

It was obvious in the way he listened to him. Clear in the way he used to put his candy in his lunchbox and once Will found out, he'd steal it, but Jonathon never moved his 'hiding place.' He kept it right where he knew Will knew where it was. Jonathon's love was apparent in the way that didn't need to be heard because he could feel it like you could feel the wind.

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Jonathon Byers loved like the wind.

Nancy Wheeler honestly wasn't prepared for it at first.

After Steve's energetic, affectionate, verbal, quite clear love, she had a hard time telling if Jonathon really had feelings for her at all.

Every smile was tentative, every touch was rare and cautious, and he didn't usually seek out her presence, often, she would be the one to stride up to him and initiate their contact.

It worried her at first that maybe he was trying to distance himself from her because he felt too guilty about what they had done, or that maybe it was the spur of a moment action and now with thought, he realized it didn't mean anything to him. Perhaps he was just too nervous to tell her he didn't feel that way about her.

It was such a big change from when she had been with Steve that she was too busy looking at what wasn't there, that she didn't notice what was.

Jonathon Byers loved like the wind. It could be subtle. Soft to the point of you barely recognizing it is there. Like the wind in fall that is just so natural that you can take the cool breeze for granted if you aren't paying enough attention.

A couple weeks passed and not much had changed. Nancy wasn't quite upset, but she was confused. She found that the best way to figure things out was by paying close attention like she did in class when she didn't understand something. If that didn't work, she'd go looking for answers herself. She wasn't one to be side-tracked, she stayed strong and kept a level head; Nancy knew it was the only way to figure these things out. Some would say this subject required a delicate touch, she wasn't a very delicate girl, she didn't dance around what she didn't understand. She went straight for the punch, but she wasn't stupid. You only strike when you were sure on what you were fighting. Plant your feet in the right place, and then you can stand firm. She needed to figure out what she was up against.

She didn't want to fight just yet, nor did she wish to go to the source. AKA Jonathon, because he hadn't done anything wrong per say, maybe it was her that was in the wrong? She wasn't sure enough yet, and she liked to be sure. So instead, she thought she would talk about it.

Not talking about it had made her do some pretty stupid and shitty things in the past, she didn't want to make that mistake again.

That is why she found Mike.

Nancy still wasn't used to her brother letting her in his room without so much as a knock on the door, and actually being okay with talking.

Accepting her request to talk isn't the same as being comfortable with it, so he does still get that awkward look on his face that matches exactly how she feels.

"Hi," She says walking farther into his messy, *messy* bedroom. "Is, um, is everything alright?" She says a little unsure, but wanting this conversation none the less.

"Yeah," he nods, still looking down at some comic book he was reading, "What's up?" he adds after a moment, sounding completely uninterested.

She shuts the door behind her and sits on the foot of his bed which is the only place that doesn't seem to be covered in teenage boy junk.

She has a hard time figuring out how to approach what she wants to talk about, she really just wants to talk about everything with him. Mike saves her from figuring out how to approach the subject of pure insanity, by coming up with the perfect way to start the conversation himself.

Apparently he wanted to talk too.

Mike was always good with words in a way that made everything make sense.

"It's weird isn't it?" he rests his head back and stretches his neck to look up at the ceiling, "I mean, not telling anyone about everything and not talking about it ever? Don't you just ever want to scream it to the world, tell mom and dad?"

"Oh yeah, all the time," She replies instantly, not even having to think about it. "Of course."

"Right!" Mike seems relieved that his sister agrees, "But...we can't tell anyone, especially mom and dad, right?"

"No," Nancy shakes her head and sucks in a breath, "We can't. Even if we tried they wouldn't believe us."

Mike gives this delirious smile somewhere in between despair and mirth, "No, you're right. Just imagine it. Dad would say, "Oh, that's nice kids."

Nancy laughed despite herself and rubbed her forehead, "Mom would assume it was from some TV show we watched, or worse that Dungeons and Dragons game you play!"

They both laughed in that desperate way, shaking their heads and biting their lips at how un-funny this actually was.

"Jesus. We can't tell them." Nancy says after minute of silence, finally having the words sink into her brain. "It's just not safe."

"Yeah, I guess." Mike says, but he doesn't quite sounds like he believes it, Nancy doesn't know if she does either. "But....It's, it's not save like this either."

Nancy nods because as much as she would like to disagree with her brother on this subject, to comfort him and tell him they were safe, she can't. It would be a blatant and obvious lie.

"This is crazy." He finally says. Before Nancy can get in a word, he continues, somewhat angrily even, "To everybody else, we're just kids. We can't hang out all the time or people say it's weird, and we can't stay out too late even though we basically saved the world! After everything, I thought stuff would be okay..." He leaves that sentence hanging in the air, and his eyes harden moodily.

"You don't see Eleven enough, huh?"

Mike turns pink and immediately protests. "No! Not just her. Everybody!" He gets quieter, "Will especially, we really don't get to hang out as much as we used to."

Nancy's stomach twists at the mention of Will. Of all he'd been through, the hell he survived. Of Jonathon and the guilt that shines through his eyes every time his brother is so much as mentioned. "Yeah. I wished we lived closer." She huffs, becoming just as moody

as her brother, "Or something."

Silence reigns over the Wheeler children, but Nancy decides to end it because this cannot be all there is for their relationship, she promised herself she'd get better. Just seeing Will and Jonathon together made her jealous of how well they worked, of how much they cared for each other. She wanted that for Mike and herself, and if not only for Mike's sake, who definitely deserved a good older sister, but for hers too.

"You're a little young to be sneaking out." She held up her hand when he started to protest, "I know you want to see them though, just—" She looked away, "You shouldn't be walking anywhere on your own and you know it."

Mike seemed very displeased, but some part of him must have agreed because he sighs, a long suffering thing.

"And Jonathon?" *smooth subject change little brother*, she thinks to herself, but listens intently.

He continues, "Is he, um, is he freaked out? Will is, at least I think so. He doesn't talk about it that much. I was wondering how the other Byers was handling the situation."

Nancy stops short at that. Her limbs warm just a little at the mention of Jonathon, but the part that has her interested is that Mike seems to be having a similar problem as she, only with the younger Byers.

She looks at him, "I- I don't know." She shrugs and purses her lips to the side, "Jonathon and I talk about it, talk about all of that crap. It's usually really intense for the both of us, but it's nice, but, I know everything still bothers him, it bothers me too." She doesn't know why she's telling Mike this, but she wants to, so she will. Jonathon is really easy to talk to about everything, fun to debate with too, Nancy smiles internally.

"Are you talking to your friends?" She's suddenly worried that maybe she needed to do this a while before. She doesn't know what she would do without talking about the stuff they went through, she thinks she would have already done something crazy and reckless

just to feel validated.

Mike sits up straighter, "Yeah. El and me. And Will, though he avoids it like the plague. And everybody really."

"Good." She says, unexpectedly relieved, "If you want, you can always talk to me."

"I know, Nancy." He cuts her off, "If anything happens, I'll hear about it from my friends, and I'll tell you. I promise."

Nancy feels everything inside of her untwisting, something liquid like oil replacing the ice and she relaxes, finally. "Awesome, thanks. You're pretty cool, y'know." She says offhandedly, and Mike likes this a lot, she can tell.

"Am not," he says, "But we did kind of save the world. So that was okay."

She made a mental vow to do this more often.

She thinks that this is probably a good time to leave, it was pleasant, and maybe it's a good idea not to get too deep on your first day on the job.

Nancy was never known to do anything half way though.

"Hey, Mike." Her eyes flit away from her younger brother, almost, *almost*, embarrassed, "How do you-" She stops and recollects herself, "How do you know Will likes you," Her hands quickly go up to accompany her words, in some weird form of explanation, "Like-like how do you know he really cares about you, or if he's upset with you?"

Mike looks affronted at being asked such an odd question, and raises a bemused eyebrow at his sister.

She slumps, "It's just, I don't know if Jonathon *really* likes me. With Steve-" They both grimace at the mentioning of her ex-boyfriend for how things ended so badly, "With Steve, it was really obvious, Jonathon is soooo different." She looks at him, breathing from her mouth, with meaningful eyes.

Mike looks like a cross between a giddy hyena, and a mischievous kitten. It's kind of cute, but she doesn't tell him that.

"Are you, Nancy Wheeler, asking your younger brother for dating advice?" He's much too happy in this moment, but Nancy doesn't do anything to stop it, in fact she makes sure he's going to remember this moment by making an angry and embarrassed face at him.

Once he's calm enough to answer, he looks exasperated.

"First of all, Will isn't Jonathon. Just because they are brothers doesn't mean they are the same. They react completely differently to things." He gives her a pointed look, and only when she nods her head seriously, does he continue, "And Two, Nancy, Jonathon is totally into you."

Nancy is both appalled that Mike would use the words 'totally into you' and that he would so obviously use the good brother encouragement card on her. She doesn't even have time to say anything before he is speaking again.

"Seriously? Your unbelievable?" He rolls his eyes to the sky.

Nancy glares, "Mike," She stretches his name, "I wanted a real answer. I mean like, it's obvious he loves Mrs. Byers and he's always so close and protective of Will. I can't tell if he really likes me though! What if he only wants to be friends? What if he doesn't know how to tell me he doesn't like me?" She pauses, "Mike, what if I end up like mom." She sounds definitely worried now, and she kind of regrets her last couple of desperate sentences. She's shocked by her own words though. She hadn't realized how afraid she was until her thoughts were put into the open.

Mike shakes his head, "Nancy," He gives her a look that clearly says 'you're lucky I'm so nice.'

"Jonathon likes you- a lot." He spreads the words out like he's talking to a two year old, then a sincere look crosses his face "He's done stuff for you that I've never seen anyone do for someone they don't care about."

Nancy cuts him off with a chuckle, "Yeah," A beat, "he did set a Demogorgon on fire with me." She laughs again in thought, "And expose a government conspiracy theory."

Mike looks shocked for a moment, "We really need to talk more." He states blandly, but then gets back on track.

"Jonathon cares for you Nancy. El isn't good with words either, and sometimes, I have to look really hard on days where she just doesn't feel like being close, but even then, she's giving me something to work with. You have to look hard sometimes Nancy, it's not always going to be in your face."

Nancy looks at her brother, it was blunt, but she wonders when he got so mature.

"C'mere," She says, holding her arm out, and although Mike is very much about being grown up, he's not above being held right now.

He snuggles into her, "Thanks." She whispers into the room instead of into him like she wants to.

He "hns" into her chest and she chuckles. Mike lifts his head and gives a puppy like glare, "You're making me feel squishy inside."

This time she outright laughs loudly, she smiles down at him though, "I love you too, little brother."

They stay there together for a while, just breathing.

Nancy wasn't afraid of the truth like some people.

Truth was clear and precise. It hurt like a bitch, and scarred much worse, but lies left little scratches everywhere and in the end you have nothing to show for it.

Next time she saw Jonathon, she followed Mike's advice.

At first it was hard, she didn't even know what she was looking for.

Damn Mike and his cryptic riddles.

But by the second time she met up with him, she already had a mental list of patterns she was expecting to see, and theories she'd worked on.

By the end of the week she was no more satisfied than at the beginning.

She quickly gave up on whatever logical part of her brain was taking over at the moment.

Nancy decided that part of her brain stressed her out too much.

And just like that, things were so much clearer than they had been before. So much more honest.

She called to Jonathon in the lunchroom and his head that was retreating the cafeteria, probably to go to that room he printed pictures in, turned gently towards her.

A crooked looking smile lit his face and he ducked his head just the slightest bit before making his way over to her.

Everything inside her melted just the slightest bit, that warmth was back and seeping into her limbs. She watched him as he made his way over to her, and a smile crept its way up her own face.

He was happy that she called out to him.

She tilted her head slightly with the realization and let the air that seemed so much fresher now breathe into her.

As the weeks passed, she realized more moments like this.

She made herself a list.

Jonathon always smiles when I first talk to him.

She noted that it was always relieved and a little surprised.

Jonathon never greets me the same way. It's always different. "Hey, Nancy" "Hi, Nancy" "What's up" etc. and sometimes just a nod of head.

Another note went on the list to remember to ask him why it was always different, but whatever the reason, Nancy liked it. Always a surprise, never quite routine. Then again, she'd never seen Jonathon do anything quite routine.

He gives me the pudding that comes with his lunch.

She notes that he says he doesn't like pudding, but she also quickly scribbles down that he gets Cherry Coke whenever they go out, even though she knows for a fact that he hates cherries. They always share.

Jonathon was nervous at first, but now he happily tosses me a new mix-tape he made me every other week.

She listens to them in the mornings while she gets ready for school.

Jonathon is always hesitant to do it, but when he hugs me, it is tight and desperate.

Jonathon doesn't usually talk from what I've heard, but he each time I see him he seems to have something to tell me.

Jonathon loves talking about music with me and is never nervous or upset when we do.

Jonathon always grins lopsidedly when I disagree with him on some musical artist's talents.

Jonathon finds a way to sneak some kind of picture of me no matter what, even when I am a mess from hiking in the woods with him.

They do this often. She loves the forest, and he does too, though he mumbles he likes the way she smiles when they go most.

Jonathon stares at me in the classes we have together.

He did this even before the whole crappy life threatening incident.

Jonathon talks to her.

Jonathon argues with her.

Jonathon laughs with her.

Jonathon is there for her when she is especially upset about Barb.

She stops her list here and hides it inside of the hole she made in her mattress.

It stays there for a long time.

She doesn't need to keep a list after that last sentence.

She knows Jonathon cares for her because she begins to know what to look for.

Nancy doesn't even have to really look, they pop out in her mind as if they'd always been there.

She keeps a mental list going. She can't help it, and it happens to be fun.

Sometimes she goes over the long and tedious list in her head and it always makes her smile, especially on the really bad days. It makes them a lot warmer.

One day, when it is especially cold, and she's bundled up with two scarves, a hat, and her favorite brown trench coat, it happens.

It's nothing new, they've done *that* many of times by now, but this time is memorable, and she doesn't care to figure out why.

Jonathon leans over from his passenger seat in the car and towards herself where she is behind the wheel. It's a quiet Monday morning, and Nancy was just beginning to think about how much she'd wish it'd snow, at least that would fun-

And he stops before her face, and looks straight at her with unwavering and brave eyes.

"Can I kiss you?" He asks suddenly and quickly, his cheeks flare red in embarrassment.

She's shocked for a moment but she doesn't even think before she

answers.

"I'd like that a lot." She tilts her head and smiles.

He leans in towards her and their lips touch.

His lips are beyond chapped, peeling and plump as if he had chewed a hole in them. The car's heater is blaring, suffocating like, on both of their faces, in a pitiful attempt to keep them warm. The angle is weird, and Jonathon has to be uncomfortable because he's leaning way more than she is and his hip is probably hurt from the chair arm is digging into it.

But she pushes back, fierce.

She loves this.

His eyes are closed before their lips had even touched and now they are clasped tightly.

She's watching though, which is funny, because it always seems like he is the one keeping an eye on her. She decides she likes watching him kiss her, he's really happy like this.

He kisses her with desperation and passion all throughout every bone in his body, and she matches his stance. She loves the intensity in which Jonathon often has, she relates.

Jonathon Byers loves like the wind. Being close to him is like a fresh breeze cooling your back on the hottest day of summer. You wait for it to return and when it does you relish every second of that draft that soaks up just the bit of sweat at your spine. It doesn't satisfy completely because it's gone too soon. You can't help but wait for it to come back with baited breath.

When Jonathon pulled away his eyes were dancing with happiness, pleased. He straightened himself back in his seat, even has the gull to tell her that they were going to be late for school.

She shook her head, laughing.

Nancy savored the shy smile he was giving her with relish.

Jonathon's affection could be fleeting like the cool breeze. She honestly didn't mind it though. Jonathon was transparent like the wind at times, but it was okay, now she knew how to see him properly.

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Jonathon Byers loved like the wind.

Joyce knew this better than practically anyone else.

Strong and fierce like a hurricane. Completely out of control and totally one minded. It moved where it wished and followed no clear path that anyone, but it, could see or understand. It could be terrifying like a tornado and blow up from nowhere and everywhere, at any time. It was all consuming. Nothing else mattered until the storm was over.

Jonathon was a sweet boy. Joyce hadn't known how lucky she was to have such a son until Will was born, and all her oldest ever wanted to do was see Will smile.

As they grew and life became unbelievably complicated, his ideals changed.

He wanted to see Will smile, but he also wanted to keep him safe.

Jonathon was good at keeping his self-proclaimed duty no matter how unrealistic and unfair it was for him to put that job on his young shoulders.

Joyce always worried her son was going to break under such a fine and sharp pressure, but that was where her worries were wrongly placed.

Jonathon was strong, and was ready to endure anything. He was willing to drown in his own storm if that's what it took to make his brother and mom happy.

Sometimes, the thought makes Joyce wipe stray and pathetic tears from her eyes. She was strong now too, she reminded herself. She wishes she would have been stronger before.

Some people explode when they break. Everyone breaks eventually, it's an inevitable truth, and everyone deserves that right.

Joyce's oldest son breaks, but never explodes. Explosions are bright and loud and if he is bright and loud then people will look, and when people look, people see. There are so many things inside of Jonathon that he cannot let people see. Storms rolling inside the pits of his stomach, crashing hurricane waves stuck inside his head, whirling tornadoes that destroy what they can't fix.

Joyce tilts her head, *for example, a damned Demogorgon from the pits of hell.*

So instead, Jonathon Byers implodes. He collapses inward so no one sees the destruction his gales can create. No one is hurt. That's the way Jonathon likes it.

Joyce grimaced around the fact that Jonathon gained many things from her Jean wise, but the one thing she wasn't sure she wanted him to have from her, was her mind and heart that always felt too much.

She was intense. Everybody who ever met or saw her knew this. Everything about Joyce was intense, and she knew it, but had no way to stop it.

She loved too fast, too hard, and unquestioningly loyally.

It's what got her in the mess of Lonnie the first time around.

She had gotten no better over the years, which after all the shit went down, she's pretty glad she didn't find a way to get rid of it.

Jonathon has it too.

He sees something, and just knows he loves it. Just like that damn camera when he was seven.

It's very seldom and rare for either of them, but when they find that

thing, it's everything or nothing.

They easily grows attached, and it leaves them completely open for whatever it is that wants to destroy them and they wouldn't even think twice about it.

The only reason she ever considered leaving Lonnie in the dust was because she'd found something she loved even more than him. But once she'd set her mind straight and the decision was made, there was no going back, Lonnie could eat shit for all she cared in comparison to what she felt for her two sons.

When Will was captured, it was hell for her. She wouldn't have been surprised if she really *had* lost her mind.

Once the storm was over, she didn't remember how she made it through, how she managed to survive. She wasn't even sure in fact whether the storm was really over. Only one thing was for certain, when she came out of the storm, she wasn't to the same person who walked in.

She outwardly let her hurricane rain, but because Joyce was the one creating the typhoon of chaos, Jonathon couldn't let himself go as well.

When Joyce thinks about it, she wishes she were still stronger then.

Was there ever a point when she was strong enough? Where she could rest? She doesn't even have to think about it the answer, for her two boys she would spend the rest of her life learning and enduring, and she was okay with that.

Ultimately, Jonathon was left to simmer while Joyce blew down houses.

She only forgives herself for losing control so terribly because in the end, Will was safe, but she's still sure Jonathon could have a done a better job if had been given the chance.

Jonathon did get a little of his own insanity out when Nancy found him.

Whatever Nancy did for him, she wishes she knew. He was freer then she'd seen her son in years and it was oddly nice to see him so determined and needing. It was not necessarily a safe thing, a boy ended up getting beaten up, she was told, there were now burn marks permanently embedded in her carpet, and she thinks the three teens that took on the Demogorgan had enough trauma in their backpacks to last them three lifetimes.

Things settled down again when Will was brought back home. It wasn't necessary for Jonathon to rain with the wind. Where his anger and fear had gone, she had no idea, but it amazed and worried her when he went back to his old self.

No one could hold that within themselves forever, could they?

Practically a year passed and Jonathon was just as kind and responsible as he always was.

Things went to hell all over again and she thought she was going to be okay this second time. She was going to be rational, she was going to think before she acted, she was going to be prepared. She repeated this over and over in her head whenever she felt herself slipping.

It was really too easy fall. Why did she have to reach out towards the sun so hard? Couldn't she sit on the edge and watch the sun set like everybody else?

Then Will wasn't Will anymore, and thoughts of sanity left her completely. Her home wasn't a place for sanity, and her family demanded more than a stable mind could handle anyway.

In all the confusion, she lost track of Jonathon. Thoughts of him didn't resurface until he was right in front of her face, looking worn, fearful, and tense to the point of deep bone aching.

Then Bob-

She choked even in her thoughts when the scene flashed through her mind in slow motion.

Then Bob died.

There, it was easier when she said it like facts from a textbook. She was sure she could let herself come up with more book facts, like how his stomach was ripped open, or how he wouldn't stop telling them to leave him behind even when he was being eaten alive, but she forced herself to stop when the necessary facts were taken care of.

When they'd come back to the house, she'd lost herself again. Jim's presence helped her back down from floating away though.

Then it was Will. Her baby didn't deserve to always have to be the center of all this pain.

Joyce was glad Nancy was there when they killed that fucking darkness inside her son.

Jonathon needed her. Maybe Jonathon really needed his mom at the time, but Joyce couldn't be there, so she was thanking whatever god was out there that Nancy was there too.

As Joyce sat on the couch, holding her youngest child, who seemed quite content to let her fuss over him for a short time, she relished the coddling she was allowed. She knew that soon he'd be weary of her smothering but she also knew that he needed it right now.

She took breath, trying to rid her mind of the horrors that had passed in such a short amount of days. It wouldn't do anyone any good if she got upset right now.

Her heart broke for the kids who had all been sucked into the supernatural disaster. They were just children; none of them should have had to bear the torture this night had brought with it. Even if it had been by simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time, none of them deserved this.

The oldest of them was only seventeen, and in her and Hopper's eyes, still just a child. That's why Hopper was over in the corner with that Harrington kid, looking over his face carefully. The teen seemed to detest the attention from the chief and tried to play off every prick and push of his positively sensitive face.

It didn't matter how responsible they all were, or how much they acted like adults, they were still far too young to be embroiled in something as horrifying as this.

It wasn't fair.

But alas Joyce, she told herself, Life isn't fair.

The living room had become this mosh pit of old quilts and stripped bed sheets.

The children lay around, most of them having talked themselves to sleep a couple hours ago, she's sure they will be awake again in a couple hours with a second wind to continue their conversations.

She felt bonded to these kids, protective, even if they weren't all hers and even though she had hardly spoken to some of them. They were all involved even when they could've just run away and no one would have blamed them for it. The fact that they had stayed overwhelmed her and created affection in her for them. She was incredibly grateful for their contribution to saving her youngest son.

Her eyes cleared the room, quickly scanning each of the sleeping kids, trying to see if they were all okay.

She felt a spike of fear, however, when she realized that there were only eight kids in this room.

Jonathon.

He'd been fine when they got back. Practically attached to Will's exhausted side, but that was to be expected.

He was quiet though, she noted.

Her son was always quiet, but he was blank besides the affection and concern he was showing his younger brother.

She froze her soft stroking of Will's heavily sweat matted hair.

There is a calm before the storm.

Jonathon loved like the wind. At the still point where the calm is, in the eye of the storm amidst the chaos of reality. A storm was brewing in the clouded gaze of the water bank. Some say the most destructive of hurricanes are the ones sourced from anger, the ones at random, that burst unexpectedly. The truth is, the gales that silently slip away, only to be aggravated like a festering wound into existence again, are the ones that terrify, the ones that suffer. For a storm served alone with no one to witness, isn't really a storm at all. Is it?

Joyce softly stood, her eyes given away nothing. Will looked up at her with tired... everything, she bent down a kissed him slowly on the head and squeezed him tightly, unwavering.

"I'll be right back."

Will nodded, too exhausted to speak and curled into the side of the couch.

Joyce didn't want to leave her baby at a moment like this, but he would be asleep in seconds anyway, and there was something she had to know.

Joyce was notorious for her ability to head into the storm when everyone else was heading out.

She silently walked through the room, noting the couple of pairs of eyes that followed her movements like she was deconstructing the idea of the family kill circle and walking to her doom.

She didn't respond to their stares, unless the small but certain nod she sent Hopper counted for anything.

Joyce stood at Jonathon's bed room door with her forehead pressed against the wood.

She caught her breath, while listening to the deafening silence that was emanating from the inside of the room.

Her son could just be tired, wanted a bed to sleep in, she told herself desperately, he could just have needed a moment alone to collect himself. She didn't believe her thoughts for a second, but they were still reassuring.

For a moment she fought herself on the outside of room.

Maybe she was over reacting, maybe Jonathon was fine.

'Maybe' wasn't good enough for Joyce though and she pushed the door open quietly.

The room was dark, but there was enough light coming in from the open door to see into the room.

She gasped the smallest bit in relief to see Jonathon, okay, and sitting on his bed, staring at her with worried eyes.

"Mom, is everyth-"

"Everything is fine, Everyone is okay." She reassured quickly.

Jonathon ran a hand through his sweat matted hair, messing it up more than should be humanly possible. Joyce almost chuckled at the sight of his stuck up hair, but her heart clinched when a sudden thought hit her.

Why was Jonathon here. Alone.

She walked farther into the room and every bone in Jonathon's body tensed as his eyes trained on her.

Not untrusting, she reminded herself, just on guard.

As she got closer, she noticed the inflamed blotchy look of his skin around his eyes.

His nose was pure red, and his eyes glassy. He looked away from her as she got closer and quickly scrubbed his face.

If no one is there to witness the storm, is the damage only done to oneself.

Jonathon turned back with a concerned expression, his eyes reflecting broken glass, but he put up the attentive eyes that she had fallen for so man times.

"Mom, are you sure you're okay? Everything that happened tonight," he trailed off but caught himself, "do you wanna talk about-"

"Jonathon." Joyce bit her lip.

Jonathon instantly stopped and shut his mouth, staring at her, giving her the floor.

Joyce twitched a little inwardly.

A moment of silence passed, and Jonathon again opened his mouth, probably to ask her if she was alright again, or ask if something happened, worrying, worrying, worrying.

She stopped him yet again with a hand on his shoulder, sitting down on the side of the bed beside him.

She took his face in her hands and Jonathon shut his eyes, sighing silently.

So quiet.

She brought his face close to hers and put their foreheads together.

His face contorted in pain, his lip trembling.

So gentle.

She shook bodily as they sat.

The urge to crush him in a hug was so powerful she almost couldn't contain herself.

She wouldn't though. It was too soon.

The wounds were too fresh.

They were both too fragile.

It wasn't fair. They shouldn't have to be fragile anymore. They *were* fragile already. But still, they break, and break and break. It's like someone is throwing them around like shattered glass. Other people would get so small they would learn to keep a shield on their back,

tie the savior around their necks. But those two, no, they just keep letting themselves break and break and break.

When glass breaks into enough small pieces, doesn't it just stop shattering and start ricocheting off everything else?

They weren't like glass though.

They were like the wind.

"Thank you, Jonathon." Jonathon was shocked still for a moment with the power in her tiny and brittle voiced whisper, but he cradled her safely into his arms.

"Hey, it's okay. Everything is fine now."

He rubbed her back soothingly..

Why was Jonathon so good at keeping it together? Was it a skill created from necessity? Did she make her son this way?

She felt guilt crawl up her chest.

He would storm someday, but right now wasn't the time he needed it she guessed.

She would be there for him when he was ready, like he was there for her.

X

X

X

Jonathon loved like the wind.

It could be subtle as a breeze in autumn, or powerful like a tornado. The cyclone derives its powers from energy of the land. In the center of a hurricane there is an absolute peace. There is no safer place than in their center.

It is quiet because it's heard the karmic sound of the vulgar.

It is beautiful because it is aware of its flaws.

It is fearless because it learnt to recognize, illusion from real.

It is gentle because it has handled the sting of control.

It is powerful because it can never learn from its mistakes.

It is invisible because it discerns how it hurts more to be seen.

It can laugh because it has known sadness.

It is how he loves because he has felt hate.

Jonathon Byers loves like the wind.

A/N

Thank you for reading, I hope you enjoyed!

I would really appreciate if you would leave a kudos or comment. I'm needing all the encouragement I can get for this challenge! Anyone who would like to try and participate just tell me, and I'd love to give you our November word prompt list! There can never be enough Fanfiction in our world, so don't be shy!

Thank you again,

Love LadyYang3